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S I X
S E R M O N S

Upon the MANNER of
SALVATION.

BEING THE
Substance of Christianity

As preach'd at the Time of the
REFORMATION.

By ROBERT SEAGRAVE, M. A.

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INTRODUCTION.

IT being certain that modern Sermons are become defective in the Groundwork of Salvation, and have fallen off from the old Gospel, (as I have largely remark'd in another * Piece;) it is the Endeavour of these Discourses to hold forth afresh that Point, according to the Principles of

A 2 Divinity

* Letter to the People of *England*.

iv INTRODUCTION.

Divinity maintain'd by the
first Reformers. /

I must own, though I am
sorry there should be Occasion
given for it by the Clergy,
that at present the Truth of
Doctrine is almost wholly
with the Dissenters. In my
Opinion external Matters are
never greatly significant, but
that Christ be preached truly
is a material Point, and in e-
very religious Establishment
merits to be principally re-
garded,

IN

INTRODUCTION. V

IN the following Sermons nothing proceeds from any disaffection to the Clergy. Truth only is my object: And I am well assur'd 'tis my Duty not to conceal that Object, where the Souls of Mankind are concern'd. My Request to the Reader is, that he wou'd form no Prejudice against me from this Preface, nor yet in my Favour. If the Doctrine carries with it a Foundation of Truth, that will maintain itself, and yield Satisfaction to serious Protestants, who pos-

A 3 sibly

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sibly may find here something uncommon, and useful, in the great Affair of everlasting Salvation.

R. S.



THE



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Righteousness, and going about
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ROM. x. 3.

*For they being ignorant of God's
Righteousness, and going about to
establisb their own Righteousness,
have not submitted themselves unto
the Righteousness of God.*

THERE are, it seems, two
ways which mankind take
to Heaven. One is by Man's
own Righteousness, which proves a
false Way, and does not reach to
Heaven. The other is by Christ's
Righteousness, being the whole Mo-
rality of Christ's Life imputed to
Man through Faith.

THIS

THIS latter is the new and living Way, and is call'd in the Scripture God's Righteousness, as being of his devizing and giving.

THE Corruption which lodges in our inward Parts, and inspires our Nature with Pride and Self-sufficiency (though with a kind of Secrecy unknown to our selves) will not submit to God's bounteous Invention.

NATURE stands a long time in its own Light indeed, we are not aware of this Pride in Nature with all its moral Imperfection. As it was with the Jew, so it is now with every Gentile. Persons think they can do something towards Acceptance;

GOD'S *Righteousness*. II

tance; when really God's essential Holiness, and infinite Purity consider'd, they must have Christ wholly, or not at all.

They being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God.

UPON this Passage I beg leave to lay before you the following Particulars.

1st.

WHAT is the principal Hindrance this day in the World, which prevents Men from believing after the manner they ought, in Christ.

2^{dly} and lastly.

THE Necessity which lies both upon Jew and Gentile, of submitting

ting to the Righteousness of God, that is, the Necessity we are under of giving up our own virtuous pretensions, in every Respect, in case we wou'd receive the real Benefit of Jesus Christ.

1st.

I am to observe what is the principal Hindrance this day in the World which prevents so many Persons from believing aright in Christ.

Now this Hindrance is not Sin, but it is Righteousness; that is, the vain Hope of Salvation from Nature's own Endeavours. Persons, whom this vain Imagination shuts out from being Believers (howsoever they are call'd by the Name of Christians) are not Jews only, and Mahometans, and

and heathen Countrys, but it affects a large Number in Countrys under the Profession of Christ. As formerly all were not truly *Israel* who were of *Israel*; so now, tho' many are deem'd Christians, the true Church consists of a comparatively small Number.

MANY have never yet been let into the Mystery of the Gospel. To possess the outward Gospel is nothing; there must be an inward Revelation upon a Person's Spirit, to give a real Entrance into it. Too many who are going in, stop in the mid way. I apprehend such are stopt in the mid way, and do never reach Christ, who look upon him as a Saviour, and Redeemer to them, only in part. Not coming to him thoroughly,

ly, but keeping their eye on their own Deservings in some measure, he is in Effect no Saviour to them at all. They will not, cannot believe God to be so good as he is, in making Eternal Life a free Gift. They wou'd still have some measure of natural Plea, cleaving to their own Righteousness in part, with Christ to make up Defects.

THIS was the Case of the Jews; and it continues with Mankind, for Men are every where alike by Nature, who going about to establish their own Righteousness for Salvation, and not considering that a new Righteousness has been introduc'd by the Gospel, a Righteousness by Imputation, have not yet submitted to the Divine Bounty and Wisdom.

POSSIBLY Persons may mean well, in reckoning somewhat upon their own Righteousness, and their own Qualifications, for Salvation; but they may be assur'd, 'tis a total Mistake: another Gospel from what was preach'd in *St. Paul's* time, contrary to the Wisdom of God, and a Means of their living in Terror of Spirit thro' Ignorance all their Life long.

THO' we fast, and pray, and perform Acts of Charity; tho' we be constant at publick Worship, walking in holy Ordinances blameless; tho' we live watchfully and circumspectly to keep every Commandment; we must not look to this Righteousness for Salvation, no, not in any degree.

gree. It will be found light in the Scale. It will not be able to stand clear even of Sin ; we must look to the Righteousness of Christ's Life, which was perfect in its Kind, and absolute, and is set to the Believer's Account of God's free Mercy.

WE are not now under a Covenant of Works. The Gospel is of another Nature. The mildest Covenant possible cou'd do no less than ruin us. If we do not know that the mildest Covenant wou'd ruin us, we do not yet know our spiritual Poverty, as we ought ; for how can Man be justify'd with God, who is pure beyond all that we can imagine?

STILL Nature seems apt to argue, why? God expects no more than

GOD's *Righteousness*. 17

than we can do. True, but if Sin and Imperfection do necessarily condemn us, can we expect that the supreme Majesty will trifle with his essential Attributes? Cou'd he dispense with Part of our Obedience, Christ needed not to have been born. God must have the whole of the Creature's Obedience, either from us, or from another Person instead of us.

OUR Nature therefore, as it lies in its present Circumstances, must be humbled, it must be laid low e'er the King of Glory can come in; we must be empty'd of our selves, then we take a posture capable of receiving from Christ's Fulness. Nature cannot expect a white Robe shou'd be put over its filthy Rags. Being stript of these, we receive the new Cloathing, suitably and properly.

B

As

As the Jew ought not to have rested upon his Temple, or his Circumcision; nor the Papist ought to rest upon his Fasts, his Penances, his repeated Prayers, his Almsgiving; so Protestants ought not to rest upon their Knowledge, their Purity, or any Morality of Life and Conversation. This is Man's Righteousness, not that of Christ, which God will accept. Let us examine it. Was there in this or that Prayer, in our Devotion even at the holy Table, no impertinent, no wandring Thought, at least till it was discover'd, and chas'd away? And being repuls'd, still did no remainder of it return? After Conversion do not the Operations of the divine Spirit pass through a Frame of Flesh? As the purest
Water

Water passing through Earth, gathers some Degree of Foulness and Tincture; so do good Motions, passing through Mankind, receive a Tincture of Sin. Possibly the most virtuous Persons are more sensible of this Evil, than Persons who are less virtuous.

IF then Men seek only a Saviour in part, I shou'd be glad to be inform'd whence they will produce the other part.

WHOSOEVER builds any thing upon human Virtue for Eternal Life, builds upon a Sand. It is a Wave of the Sea tofs'd to and fro; it is a Reed of *Egypt*, on which if a person leans, instead of assisting him, it will run into his Hand.

'TIS perceiv'd then upon a strict, that is, upon a rational Examination, we have not a single Action, a single Point to trust to, but free Grace. We quit every moral Expectation, and fly from *Moses* to Christ.

WE go out of Ourselves to another Power ; to the incarnate Deity, who became Flesh, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him. *He is the End of the Law, the whole Accomplishment of Morality, for Righteousness to every one that believeth.*

A righteous Person is not, as such, a Believer. Christ belongs to Sinners only, such who esteem themselves

selves utterly incapable of Salvation without him. Now receiving an absolute Christ from under the Condition of Sinners, and being cloath'd upon with his personal Righteousness for ever, behold all things are become new to Nature. It finds a way of being justify'd with God, and takes a Posture of Comfort, the least Tittle of whose Blessedness it had not the least Notion of before. It comes out of Bondage; out of Uncertainty about Salvation, and Anxiety, and Terrour. After a long Season of Gloominess a Light shines in upon the Soul, and we are surrounded with it in a marvellous Manner, like *Paul* in his way to *Damascus*. A Light of Hope this, touching whose Stability and Everlastingness there can be no Question.

THIS therefore guides us to observe, secondly, The Excellency of what is call'd in our Text, not Man's Righteousness, but the Righteousness of God.

IT is a transfer'd Righteousness. A certain Robe of Whiteness and Perfection (no other being sufficient) which infinite Wisdom has devis'd for Nature, by imputing and setting Christ's Sacrifice, and personal Morality, to every Person who receives it instead of his own.

CONCERNING this new Robe St. Paul declares, *I count all things* (every moral Pretension, for that is the Sense in this place) *but Loss, and as Dung, so may I win Christ,*
and

and be found in him, not having mine own Righteousness according to Nature, but the Righteousness which is of God, which is deriv'd from God, by Faith. St. Paul had been as strict a Liver in the way of the Commandment as any man, yet says he, *What things were Gain to me, those Considerations of my personal Virtue which had given me an hopeful Prospect of Salvation in Times past, I counted Loss for Christ.* It was a Qualification worse than nothing, in comparison of a Merit in Christ. To have a standing upon the Merit of the Son of God, is an advantageous standing indeed.

THE Reason is manifest. The Performances of the Messiah, whether in suffering divine Vengeance,

B 4

or

or in discharging the Dutys of Morality, (all which he did and suffer'd not in any respect for himself) were compleat, were unexceptionable, were altogether perfect in their Kind.

GOD has declar'd his Reconcilement. He has accepted a price for the Believer's Salvation, and he will not be paid twice, so as to exact it of the Believer too.

WHAT God and Christ have already done in this Matter, no one can do after them. There are such Riches in this Christ that no words can reach to describe. Mercy so freely shew'd to the distress'd, and condemn'd, big with such infinite Bounty, is a Mystery which the Angels desire to look into, and which
I will

will afford Matter more than sufficient for the most strengthen'd Understandings to meditate through Ages eternal.

HERE is Peace in such Believing, a white Stone with a Name which none can read but they who have it. Here arises a resting Place from the Storm and Tempest, the uneasy and distressful Thoughts, which torment mere natural Men in a weary Land.

THIS Refreshment of Nature entirely surpasses any other which our Spirit would gather. A Refreshment from a deep Spring, and from a quite different Foundation than what the most successful Moralist can stand upon. It does not hang upon any Power in our selves, but on the
Power

Power and Sufficiency of One, who was God as well as Man. Christ's Work is sure of its extensive Influence. Likewise God's favour in giving us an Interest in his Work, does not depend on us, or our Behaviour, either before or after our Calling. Our Interest, I say, in Christ does not properly depend on us or our Behaviour, but on God's free Eternal Love, and it flows from what Christ has already done, before our Actions were wrought, or our Persons born into the World.

Now an Hope arises in this View such as is founded on God's boundless Love and Glory, (still in and for Christ) all the parts of which a Christian sees distinctly and infallibly. Yet our natural Mind, it seems,

seems, is slow to believe thus much. It appears too much to be true. Many Men apprehend certain Terms, and Conditions, of Salvation; whereas would they search the Gospel, Christ is really free, and his Benefit not to be purchas'd over again as it were by us. In brief, Man's Righteousness is so far from being a Qualification for receiving Christ, that 'tis a Disqualification, indeed the only Disqualification. 'Tis the greatest Bar (in the sense I am speaking of it, and let him that readeth understand) this day in the World against a saving Faith; and, if I mistake not, a Species of Anti-Christ, which more or less rules in many Persons Minds, though they do not know it.

Now

Now after the Soul has receiv'd the Grace of true Faith, it is constantly wont to have receiv'd the Seeds of Holiness, and Sanctification too. A real Believer is always an holy Person, though an holy Person (in human Acceptation) is not always a real Believer. Faith produces Virtue more effectually, and generously than any other Spring; that is, Good Works flow regularly from a Spring of Gratitude. They ought to be done in a way of Thankfulness, and from a Zeal to God's Glory, whom Faith has discover'd to have before done, and transacted, so much for our Soul.

A remarkable Description of this Matter is held forth in the 16th Chapter

GOD'S Righteousness. 29

Chapter of the Prophet *Ezekiel*. Thus saith the Lord God unto *Jerusalem*, and herein to the Christian Church, for *Jerusalem* is ever a Figure of the Church, *thy Birth and thy Nativity is of the Land of Canaan, thy Father was an Amorite, and thy Mother an Hittite.* (Sinners we are on both sides.) *In the day thou wast born, thy Navel was not cut, neither wast thou wash'd with Water. None Eye pity'd thee, but thou wast cast out in the open Field, to the loathing of thy Person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own Blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy Blood, live. Yea, I said unto thee (observe how the Words are repeated, to imprint this point*

*Of submitting to
point the more upon our Meditation)
when thou wast in thy Blood, live.*

WE see here a Proceeding evidently of mere Favour, independent of Qualifications in the Creature, to recommend it; nay, without its Knowledge, and whilst yet the Person of the Creature was no other than loathsome.

IT follows, *When I passed by thee, it was a Time of Love. I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy Nakedness. I sware unto thee, and enter'd into Covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine. THEN washed I thee with Water, and I thoroughly wash'd away thy Blood from thee, and anointed thee with Oil.* Here it is remarkable, *AFTER I sware unto thee,*

thee, I washed thee, not BEFORE. So that here was not the least Tittle of Qualification in the Elect, existing previously by way of Inducement to move God; but God declaring it to be a Time of Love, that is, free Love, first sware, and entered into Covenant to promote the Creature, and then proceeded afterward to shed upon *Israel* a Sanctification of Nature, that they might be fitted for, and suited to their heavenly Portion. *I cloathed thee with broidered Work, with Gold, and Silver and Jewels, and thou becamest perfect through the Comeliness which I (that is, God himself) put on thee.*

IN the same manner St. *Paul* says, *when we were Enemies we were reconciled.* Now Enemys are far from a State

State apt to move Favour. Yet, God was reconcil'd to us thro' Christ, and caus'd his Eternal Son to be our Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. So when *Paul* himself was on his way persecuting the Church, he was arrested in the midst of that Unworthiness by free Mercy; and also singular Gifts were pour'd upon him at the same instant of Time, vesting him with an Apostleship.

IN Christ Jesus, says the Apostle, *ye who were sometimes far off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ, who his own self bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree.* He was a Lamb for an absolute Propitiation, provided of God without our knowledge. And we are justify'd also by
his

his active Obedience in discharging each duty of the moral Law by his Life, as if we had discharg'd these by our Lives. To this end, that no Flesh shou'd boast in any measure whatsoever. God is so jealous of his Glory in this respect, that he will not give Christ to any Man, unless he submits to take him freely.

FOR what can a Creature give to the Creator which it has not receiv'd? We seldom return a thousandth part of what he has lent us.

Now the proper Office and Place of Man's Righteousness is that it witnesses to his own Conscience, and likewise to the World, a Proof of his Faith. Indeed a right Faith is as necessary to be discern'd thereby,

C

as

as a Tree is discern'd by its Fruit.
*Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns?
or Figs of Thistles?* It as ill proves
an elect Person to be wicked or im-
moral. Tho' we do not contribute
the least Grain to our Salvation, for
that is ever finish'd before to our
Hands, yet we have much to do in
a Way of Duty, and Gratitude.

GOOD Works are not before Jus-
tification, for Justification goes be-
fore any of our Works, good or bad;
they follow after Justification, in the
most comfortable and genuine Or-
der. In which Order Religion appears
a thing both practicable, and comfor-
table. In any other Light this Point
is neither comfortable, nor practica-
ble.

LET

LET us therefore conclude to take our Religion from Scripture. Let us not content ourselves with the World's Religion; but be able, by searching the Scriptures, to render a *Reason of our Hope. Let us stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free*; and not come short of the Truth, in any Degree. If we do not come up to the whole Truth, it is not the Truth, and cannot make any Person free. The real Truth frees the Spirit of Men, in a constant, and settled manner.

LASTLY, by this happy Attainment *an Entrance will be ministred unto you abundantly*, according to the Apostle, *into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus*
C 2
Christ.

Christ. You will find an Entrance into his spiritual Church here, which consists of Believers out of all Nations, and all Parties, and by the Merit of the same Christ an Entrance into the Kingdom of Glory, when it shall be reveal'd hereafter.





PHILIP. iii. 7.

*What things were Gain to me, those I
counted Loss for Christ.*

THESE Words do not relate to any worldly Gain, but to Gain in a spiritual Sense, when there arises a hopeful View of Salvation. In this View the Apostle, it seems, had been zealous for the Law, not ceremonial, but moral, for by the ceremonial Law no Person could well expect to be sav'd; that is, he had formerly entertain'd Notions of Salvation through his having kept the Commandment.

THE Generality of Mankind go in the same Error. Men are willing to hope Salvation, by their Morality of Life, their Piety, Repentance, Charity, (alafs! did they once know their Corruption) an impossible thing. *St. Paul* being at length convinc'd of his Error, found that Man's Righteousness has no share in this point: It cannot come up to it. Only Christ's Righteousness transfer'd to us, and set to us, by Faith, can possibly do so much.

THE Apostle had been an exact Liver, yet he found it necessary to think so; neither is Morality better, or more availing with respect to God, in a Christian, than in a Jew. Touching the Law he had been
blameless,

blameless, uncensurable in his Life, and Conversation ; yet observes he,

What things were Gain to me, those I counted Loss for Christ.

I proceed to consider upon this Subject the following Particulars.

1st.

HE that wou'd be fav'd, must depend upon no Excellence, either civil or moral, but on the righteous Merit of Christ only.

2dly.

CHRIST therefore is true Gain. The Apprehension of him through Faith, is a Privilege, and a Communion valuable indeed.

C 4

1st.

1st.

HE that would be fav'd must depend upon no personal Excellence, either civil, or moral.

THE Apostle had been, as appears by the Chapter before us, of the Stock of *Israel*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, an *Hebrew* of the *Hebrews*; so the Jews glory'd in the same Vein. They had *Abraham* to their Father, to them appertain'd the Covenant and the Promises; They had the Temple built by *Solomon*, and after the Captivity rebuilt, and beautify'd by *Jerobbabel*, and *Herod*.

THE Temple, it is observable, they valu'd themselves upon exceedingly. *The Temple of the Lord*, say they, *The Temple of the Lord!*

Now

Now these Privileges were valuable, had they been us'd and apply'd in a spiritual sense ; but unless the Jews went further and deeper than the outward Honour, the outward Honour could not benefit them in any Degree. It is the Spirit which giveth Life. So neither could any personal Righteousness, because at best polluted with Sin, and unanswerable to the Purity of God, with whom we have to do. God is pure beyond all we can imagine, and not capable of having his Justice satisfy'd by us.

As the Jew had no way of satisfying divine Justice, except by the Messiah at his coming, so is it with the Christian. At this time it is not
Baptism,

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Baptism, or a Christian Name that can save any Man ; but the property of a Christian, as he is in Christ. Nor can this be done by the Temple, or in virtue of any particular Church, unless we communicate with Christ by benefit of faith. Church-Communion is good to them who are in Christ, but 'tis nothing at all till Christ is reveal'd in a Christian.

THE ten Commandments were never given whereby to save, but whereby to condemn, that Man perceiving the impossibility of his Life its thorough answering thereto, might for that reason have recourse to Christ. The Commandment was given to rouse the Conscience, to stir up a Conviction of Sin, Providence meaning first to shew human Nature

ture its Misery, and then reveals its Remedy.

No Person can stand in Judgment with God, no not in any measure. The exquisit Mansions of Heaven are not attainable by human Virtue, surrounded as it is with its present necessary Imperfection. A Corruption is rooted in our inward Faculties. A terrible Corruption, were it not a part hereof that 'tis conceal'd from most, and none ever knew the whole of it.

MOST Persons who think they see, are yet in very Darkness, they think they have a Competency of good Works, when they please to exert themselves, and perhaps are rich in Devotions, and Charities,
when

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when in truth *they are wretched and miserable, and poor and naked, and blind.*

A Believer has his Eyes open'd in this matter. Such a one is brought into a new Light, he is come into a new way of looking both upon himself and upon God. He sees that Eternal Life is no other than a free Gift, in virtue of God's reconciliation through Christ, and in virtue of Christ's righteousness and morality, set to us and transfer'd to us, instead of our own, for this purpose.

AND this leads me to observe now, 2dly, that Christ only, in the View of Salvation, is gain to the Spirit of Man. To have an Interest in, and Communion with him, is
the

the only Communion which truly avails us.

WHATSOEVER spiritual Hope the Apostle's strictness of Life whilst a Moralist, had formerly given him, when once the Exactness and Depth of the Commandment reach'd him to convince of Sin, for a standing in Christ he renounces it gladly. He had been alive and in high Expectations, but the edge of the Law slew him at last. Having stood still, as it were, and examin'd seriously his Life, and his Thoughts, and found that the Law made no Abatement, he perceiv'd such a standing could not do.

IN the midst of this Conviction of Spirit, Christ is reveal'd. There

46 *Moral Expectations*

he sees a Refuge from the flaming Sword, and a new Righteousness wherewith he might appear before divine Judgment comfortably. Unregenerate Men indeed, who know not an hundredth part of their Sinfulness, do presume, and content themselves with their doubtful Situation, but this is not the case when due Light enters.

IN Christ I say, the Apostle found a rational Rest. And accordingly he counts his former Notions, as *Loss* wholly, and as *Dung*, so he may win Christ, and be found in Him hereafter, not having on, says he, my own Righteousness, but the Righteousness which is of God, or which is given us of God, through Faith. I desire, says he, to know nothing,

nothing, henceforth not to have his Mind busy'd with unprofitable Questions, and Opinions; *but Jesus Christ.*

AND why, think we, does the Apostle in all his Epistles speak so remarkably, and as it were in a continual strain of Christ? Doubtless because he had a deeper Insight into the Value of Christ, than Persons of the World have. He knew the Riches of Christ to the Soul, most polluted in its self, yet destin'd to be immortal.

ETERNAL Life is always a free Gift, considering our Circumstances it cannot be otherwise. *God's Thoughts are higher than our Thoughts*, and his Goodness more exceeding,

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celling, *as the Heavens are higher than the Earth.* This free Gift is held forth by the Merit of one Person, the Son of God taking Flesh, that the Sons of Flesh might become the Sons of God.

NOT that this imputed and kind of new Merit leaves the Believer a Licence to sin, and to neglect all Diligence in himself. It is no such Matter. No common and impenitent Sinner is a Believer. It is fit and reasonable, that Men should glorify God by all the Purity, and Virtue, they can. Though it be precluded a place in the cause of their Salvation by Christ's Righteousness, alone unexceptionable; yet it is a necessary Preparatoriness, it is a necessary fitting Men for Heaven.

A true Christian is exercis'd in much
Virtue.

Now in Christ fully understood
as a compleat Righteousness to us,
instead of our own Rags, Men have
their Strength, which cannot fail
them. Such cease to be tofs'd to
and fro, with every Wind of Doc-
trine. Their *House is built upon a
Rock*. Here then arises a true *rest-
ing-place to the weary*. For, the
Christ we have cast our selves upon,
and whose word we have that he
will not reject any who do so, was
God as well as Man. As such he
merited in an infinite Degree. 'Tis
a thing impossible that he should
miscarry in the point he has under-
taken, being able to save, I say,
D *being*

50 *Moral Expectations*

being able to save to the uttermost, to perfection, to the end.

WELL then might St. Paul throw away all his former Notions, for the Apprehension of a Saviour of this Kind. He gladly went out of himself, and quitted all the forms of Righteousness he knew of; yes the sincere Obedience, though pardonably imperfect, many talk of, for a Righteousness so infallible.

SUCH are the Riches of Christ! *In whom are hid*, as the Scripture expresses it, *the Treasures*, I say, *the Treasures of Wisdom, and Knowledge.* In Comparison of this way to Life every other is Darkness, and Folly; is Superstition, and Delusion; from whatsoever Authority, or Example,
it

it may have the advantage of coming. Reveal'd Religion, Faith and Practice, Repentance, Sincerity, and the like specious Words, are certainly another Gospel than what *St. Paul* preach'd, and no other than Guile, and Imposition.

WE find plainly *St. Paul* esteem'd every thing but Christ as Loss to his Understanding. He esteem'd his former Zeal, no better than Folly. His past Labour and past Time, lost Labour and lost Time. He had now found Rest, the Rock of Ages, and the Mystery of the Gospel was truly open'd to him, which the World is seemingly full of, and yet it is known but to few.

UPON a due Apprehension, and Feeling of this point, it is observable,

that Christians begin to exercise all the parts of their Duty with Cheerfulness, their Duties being not now upon a foundation of Life, but upon a foundation of Thankfulness. The Spirit ceases to be enslaved to Death, and Judgment, the daily uneasy Case of natural Men. It gains an Enlargement, a Freedom according to that Promise of Christ, where speaking of spiritual Freedom he says, *If the Son, that is Jesus Christ, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*, in the best Sense and Extent of that Word. The whole Condition of a Christian is new, and happy.

IF Men consider, no other worshipping of God can be a reasonable, and acceptable Worship. Properly

perly God is never worship'd in the dark. Superstition indeed abounds in the World, and too many are contented with it. But Religion cannot be without standing in a comfortable Light. *This is the true Light, which lighteth every Man, that cometh into the World.* Here we meet the Earnest of the Spirit, the true God, and eternal Life.

LET no Person so understand me, that because the Work of Salvation is already and always effected to the Hand of a Believer, Believers have therefore nothing to do. They have nothing to do in that View, and it wou'd be disbelieving shou'd they think of doing any thing in it; yet they have much to do in a way of

Gratitude, in a way of Discipline, and Patience.

THOUGH Christ has finish'd all, as he said, on the Cross, and properly no Person adds, or contributes the least Grain to his own Salvation, yet Faith must be fruitful of good Works, otherwise the imaginary Possessor of it does not belong to Christ. Not because good Works contribute to Salvation, for that is already finish'd, if at all it may be, by Christ, but because Sanctification of Nature ever attends and accompanies Justification. There is but one sort of true Faith, and that ever produces fruits to God's Glory.

MORALITY is unalterable. Every reasonable Being is oblig'd to be
virtuous,

virtuous, agreeably to its Nature, and Faculties, and with a View to the glorifying God, though it has properly no Claim for doing its Duty. Also Discipline is necessary for our Nature at present, much Discipline, to purge and refine it, into a fitness for the Kingdom of Heaven. Were Nature to be admitted into that exquisite Region, with its present Appetites, and Vices, about it, it wou'd find no Heaven in the place. And this is the Reason why the Gospel is so full of Precepts directing Men to Self-denial, Sobriety, Moderation, and every other Virtue. It is according to Reason, that that which must be spiritual hereafter, shou'd be in some measure spiritual now.

A Christian, tho' he has cast himself absolutely on Christ's Merit, yet has no Ground of Idleness, or Neglect, in Duty. He has more to do, even than Persons who have not the true Faith, because he is more awake, and is more sensible of the Bitterness of Sin, and has more Love and Gratitude towards God, than such Persons can have. Neither indeed will the Power of God's Spirit within suffer him to lie in Sin habitually, and neglect his Duty in the main, tho' he wou'd. It is rather most true, that a Believer is exercis'd in a continual Warfare, fighting against Sin, and in the present Life is no other than a Stranger and a Sojourner. Still his inward Comfort renders him ample Amends.

So then the Work of Christ consists in that he hath by himself and at once procured for us Blessedness of an infinite Extent. Pardon of Sin, and future Life, and even all things which are properly a Blessing here. A valuable Mediator this, past Comparison, Estimation, Thought.

THE Worth of Christ is not wont to be perceiv'd suddenly. Many Persons acknowledge that they have need of him in part, to make up their own Defects; few apprehend that they need him in all respects. Whereas, he is not to be divided. He must be had whole, or not at all. Shou'd Man have to do with God, in any Degree, he dies. Who for that Reason enter'd into Covenant,

nant, not with us, (as some indifcreetly imagine) but with Christ. He stands wholly in our place ; and the Believer lays hold on him for Justification at the Bar of God's Judgment, and Majesty.

WHAT Man's Mind is concern'd in the Affair is this, to discern an Evidence of so much Happiness procur'd to it. Now an Evidence of this kind, and an Assurance of the Heart before God, is not wont to be gain'd suddenly. Persons must wait with the infirm Man at the Pool of *Bethesda* for the moving of the Waters. They must knock at the Door. They must search the Scriptures, and put on Seriousness, and be conversant with serious Persons. *It is a Saying worthy always of all acceptation, that*
Jesus

Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners. Indeed, Men must come to him for Help throughly, and not stop in the mid way. In order to which, it is highly expedient (as the World is now manag'd) that they have recourse to Scripture with their own Eyes; and be exercis'd therein with their own Endeavours.

LET us all hear carefully the preaching of the Apostle *Paul*. Let us hear his Epistle to the *Romans*, to the *Corinthians*, to the *Galatians*, to the *Ephesians*; which, with the rest of such Epistles, are preserv'd by Providence (if Men do not suffer themselves to be beguil'd) for Use and Profitableness, to all Sorts and Orders. Those who do not read the Scriptures may easily be amus'd; and pro-

probably, have taken up Superstition, though they do not know it, instead of Religion. Most human Books are barren, and guileful, and dry. Whereas, upon the Scriptures Persons form their Faith, and may place a Confidence with Safety.

IT is observable, when St. *Paul*, who counted every Knowledge as Loss, in Comparifon of Christ, once found him, he ceas'd to covet any other Knowledge. He was learned, and knew, no doubt, many things, as having been brought up at the Feet of *Gamaliel*. Yet nothing obtains a place in his Writings, from the Time of his Conversion, except Jesus Christ. And why does he observe this Method but because
there

there is Vanity in every other Scheme,
and Folly, and Delusion?

To conclude. Without a distinct Apprehension and Knowledge in the one Article of Justification, the Entertainment of other Articles of Belief, were they a thousand, is nothing to Men's purpose. There is nothing in Learning, or in Wisdom, or in Power, unless Christ be in them, to sanctify them to the Soul. There is nothing in high Birth, Education, or any national Privilege. There is nothing in the Communion of this or that Church, or Party, unless so far as there is Communion with Christ also, in Faith and Virtue of Living. Appearances and Names beguile the World, the Spirit only giveth Life.

OF true Religion Christ only is the Beginning, the Middle and the End. He only is the Test of Truth; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He has left his Directions in Scripture, if haply Men will seek after him, if haply they can discern their own utter Imperfection, and gather up a Share in that Righteousness, which by its self is compleat and infallible. This alone can free their Nature from Bondage, Terror, Doubt.

THIS is the Power of God. It frees the Believer's Spirit, it enlarges him, it leads him forth into a wide Field of Wonder, Praise and Thankfulness to Almighty God, and Joy and Peace within himself, every day henceforward, and every Hour of his Life.

JOHN



JOHN iii. 36.

*He who believeth on the Son, hath
Everlasting Life.*

A PLAIN and full Declaration This, concerning the Blessedness of such, who believe in Jesus Christ. An infallible Promise of Eternal Life bestow'd freely, but that too many want Faith to credit it.

THE number of Persons who receive these Words in their free true Extent is small. And though the World seemingly abounds with
Christians

Christians who are evil Livers, yet there are more who fall short of being real Christians, thro' Want of Faith, than thro' Want of Practice.

THE word Faith has in these days almost lost its glorious Signification, has lost its Signification, even with those Men who profess a Zeal against Deism, and Infidelity.

THRO' the Error and Corruption of Ages the Sense of Words has alter'd. The Sense of Words which in Religion are of greatest Importance.

THE Word Church has long ago lost its Scripture-Sense. So the Notion of believing is vastly different now, from what it meant in the Apostles

Apostles times, nay from what it meant at the time of our Reformation from the Errors of *Rome*; too many still taking up their Notions from human Authority, and from Education, and from Custom, whereas we ought to be satisfy'd about Religion, from nothing less than Scripture, with our own Eyes, and according to the best of our Ability.

SCRIPTURE is ever the same.
He who believeth on the Son, hath Everlasting Life.

I shall beg leave to observe upon this subject the following Particulars.

1st.

WHAT it is to believe in Christ.

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2dly,

2dly and lastly.

How expedient it is for all sorts of Men to be conversant in Scripture, in order to their clear and comfortable Knowledge in this Matter.

1st.

WE consider what it is to believe in Christ.

Now it wou'd be an easy thing to receive a right Knowledge of this point, wou'd we draw our Knowledge of it immediately and directly from Scripture. But to receive Religion upon trust, and as it were by a Majority of hands, is most vain. Mistaken Zeal has done endless Mischiefs.

By this Mistake the Word Church hath long lost its first Signification, and now comprehends with false Hope (too often) whole Nations and Multitudes, which at first signify'd the Elect only, and such who are made Christians by the Holy Spirit. So, to believe, if we wou'd not be led by vulgar Mistake (for I am speaking freely and in justice to Men's Souls) does not consist in yielding an Assent to the History of Revelation in general, acknowledging the reality of Christ's Person, Preaching and Miracles, but it consists properly in one single Point, namely, to believe in his Righteousness, instead of any our own, for Justification.

By Him, all who believe, are justify'd from all things, from which
E 2 *they*

they cou'd not be justify'd by the Law of Moses. Acts x. 43.

THAT is, such who properly believe in Christ, do it with a View of being entirely accepted with God, through Christ's Sufferings, and Obedience, when as they cou'd never be so accepted, ev'n after their best Endeavours, by any moral Living, any Repentance, any Devotion, any charitable Actions, or other possible Virtue of their own.

HEAVEN is so exquisite an Happiness, and God so pure, it cannot be compass'd by human Virtue, our Sins and unavoidable Imperfections consider'd; therefore Believers have Humility to accept of Christ's virtuous Merit. With that they are
new

new cloath'd, with that they will stand unexceptionable in the great Day of future Judgement.

GOD has given his Son to such who renounce their own wretched Righteousness, who are *poor and naked, and blind*, in their own Opinion. The Revelation of this free Bounty casts about the Soul a truly marvellous Light. The Light of a Believer's Day, as the Prophet says, is sevenfold.

HIS Spirit within becomes free. He conceives new Hopes, and sees God in a perfectly new Light, wherein he never beheld him before.

HE comes forth from under the Condition of Terrour, and Uncertain-

ty about Salvation ; from a Condition of Bondage, which is the constant torment of mere natural Men. He finds Christ to have been the End of the Law for Rigteousness to him, he finds Christ to have paid the utmost farthing, that he has sav'd him to the uttermost, and that by him he has Access to the Throne of God, not with Anxiety and Dread, but with some Measure of Boldness, and Confidence.

HE has an Earnest of the Spirit, testifying to him his Election. He has an Assurance of the Heart before God.

Now if this be true, as undoubtedly it is, 'tis to be fear'd many who are call'd Christians know nothing
of

of Christ; thousands who are call'd Believers have never yet been Believers, whatever they may be. Such are in a Way of working out their Acceptance, through Prayer and Penance, and Fasting and Charity, (which are good in their proper place, but out of it are ruinous) so are yet under the Law, yet upon no better than moral Foundation, which is no savable Foundation for corrupt Nature; Nature cannot be sav'd (wou'd Men know it) by the mildest Law possible. Therefore Christ is no Saviour to them. They do not receive him, nor wou'd the Jews, except as a Teacher, and perhaps a Saviour in part to make up Defects.

THIS is a Christ of Man's vain Imagination, not God's: This is not believing.

A Real Believer rests upon Christ in an only and constant Manner. A Rock against which not even the Terrors of Sin itself can prevail, to make it shake. And well he may, for Christ's Merit with the Father was boundless, it has been accepted, and is set to our account.

WHAT he has suffer'd and paid, does not only extend to our past Offences, or present, but to our Offences yet to come. His Merit extends to the whole Necessity of a Believer's Life, consider'd together. It happily comprehends us at once from the beginning to the End.

CHRIST has satisfy'd for the whole Infirmary of human Life by
one

one payment upon the Cross, and God will not exact the payment twice. No Sin can condemn a Believer (nor indeed can he sin habitually) because Christ has already satisfy'd for every Sin, past and to come, before they were committed, and before the Believer was born into the World.

STILL Nature is slow of Belief. Most Persons think 'tis too much to be true. So it is the Devils, and unenlighten'd Men will not believe God, to be so good as he is, *How can these things be?* lies in Nature a long time.

AND yet it is certainly nothing less than Pride, and Obstinacy, which hinders Men from believing thus far. For, what shou'd hinder God's
Liberality,

Liberality, his infinite Liberality if he so pleases? A Gospel of this Kind is most suitable to the divine Perfections.

THIS in fact is the very Test of the Gospel, the very distinguishing Point which renders Persons Believers, or not.

GOD will not admit us to have any share properly in our Savation, lest we shou'd have Ground of boasting. Indeed any share is impracticable, Nature never acting to perfection one single Virtue. When we have done all, we are unprofitable Servants.

WE must gladly renounce all our filthy Rags, in case we wou'd be
cloath'd

cloath'd upon with Christ's spotless Obedience. God will not put his spotless Obedience over our Rags, they must be put off; if a Man has any manner of Notion of his own Righteousness, as working together with that of Christ, towards his Salvation, that one thing shuts him out from being a Believer. Nay this Thought of his own Righteousness shuts him out more than Sin itself. Publicans and Harlots can enter before such.

Now being naked, and empty'd of our selves, we are regularly the Object of divine Bounty in this Matter. Otherwise, the least Grain of Pride, and Self-Sufficiency destroys our Expectation.

THIS

THIS Point requires to be well weigh'd and consider'd.

Now the Way, my Brethren, to be rightly inform'd, and rightly establish'd, in any part of true Religion, seems to me This, that Christians be conversant in Scripture, and not to take up too rashly, and implicitly with the general Religion of the World.

WHICH leads me to the second and last Particular I propos'd to speak upon, namely, the Usefulness of our fetching Religion, and our Apprehensions about Christ carefully from Holy Scripture.

IF we take these from Men without Concern for their Truth, they may

may happen to be true, and they may not. Whereas, we are sure of proceeding in a way of Duty and in a way of Certainty, if we learn at the Fountain-Head.

PERHAPS some will say, that the Scriptures are not easily understood, except by learned Persons. To this Scruple I answer, 'tis a Suggestion thrown into the World, a Tare sown in the Field of it artfully by Man's Enemy ; they are plain in all necessary Points to the plainest Persons ; in such Points which are not necessary to be known as yet, neither the Unlearned, nor the Learned will know all to the End of the World.

IN short, the Bible is full as plain, except that Men are kept back from it

it by their own uncommanded Fears, to the Unlearned as the Learned, in every Article of Importance to the Soul.

AGAIN, The World abounds in Ministers of Religion, yet a Christian is not oblig'd to esteem every Person a Minister of God, merely from his having an Authority by human Law, nor yet to depend upon our teaching, after an absolute, and unenquiring Manner.

'TIS his private Duty to weigh his Minister's Words in the Scale of his Bible, that he may be assur'd of their being true. Otherwise, he takes Man's word, and obeys Man, not God.

THE People of *Berea* we find commended, and are call'd *more noble*

ble than they of *Thessalonica*, because they search'd the Scriptures daily, to compare and examine thereby, even the Words of the Apostles themselves.

IF every private Christian does not make this Search, he does not acquit himself of his Duty, and there are many, very many Chances against him.

PERSONS serious about Salvation must look for somewhat more, than what is found, either at the Minister's Mouth, or in any Religion as establish'd by Men; he must look for somewhat more, than what is found in customary Forms of Faith, otherwise, he will be very liable to Defects.

CON-

CONCERNING our Book of Common Prayer, whatsoever good things may be in it, we cannot affirm of it, that it is the Bible. There is a large Difference (shou'd be) between the Authority of these two upon a Christian's Conscience. Well then, therefore no Christian ought by any means to rely so far on the Authority of the Common Prayer Book, as to neglect the greater Authority of the Bible. This wou'd be an obeying Man, and believing in Man, not a believing in God.

WE have also three Creeds, the *Athanasian*, the *Nicene*, and the *Apostle's Creed*. Yet the Scripture must be consulted besides these, or Men will be defective, nay greatly mistaken

mistaken in their Faith. Not because these Creeds are not true, for they contain Truth ; but for this Reason, because they do not hold forth the chief, the principal Truth.

THE chief Truth is this one Article, to believe in Christ, and in no other Righteousness, for Justification. To know which point wou'd possibly be sufficient, without ever hearing of the other ; whereas, to hear of the other, or a thousand other without this, is not sufficient.

THE Apostles Creed, not properly so call'd, has not a Word of believing in Christ for Justification in it. It mentions indeed the principal Parts of his outward Character, but not of his inward Character.

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Now

Now a Man may easily give Credit, that Christ was born of the Virgin *Mary*, suffer'd under *Pontius Pilate*, yet be a perfect Stranger to his inward Virtue, his Power to save. The outward Character of Christ the Mahometans themselves allow; the Jews also could say, *Thou art a Teacher come from God.*

THE Matter lies in believing that he is the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, by the unexceptionable Morality of whose Life, imputed to us, and transfer'd to us, we expect Salvation. We acknowledge our own to be no Righteousness, and we embrace his, instead of it.

HUMILITY in this Degree makes a Christian; Humility in any less Degree,

Degree, does not make a Christian.
Any less Degree is Disbelieving.

YOU will forgive me this Zeal in speaking, because your Eternal Salvation is evidently concern'd in it. *He who hath the Son* (in the Sense I have been shewing) *hath Life; He who believeth not the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*

Too many content themselves in these days with Amusements, instead of true Religion; and with Shadows of Faith, instead of the Substance.

WHAT satisfies the rational Understanding, and gives a comfortable Foundation for religious Performances to go upon, is some Evidence of

Christ within, and an Earnest of the Spirit, shewing to yourselves your Interest, and Share in him. No Communion with outward Societies can save, nor Church-Privileges avail us, unless we have Communion with Christ at the same time, and are of that Church, which is not form'd by Men, but made so by Grace.

LABOUR therefore to read, and understand the Evidences of Salvation, as they are held forth in Scripture. Turn over the Writings of St. *Paul*; his Epistle to the *Romans*, to the *Galatians*, to the *Ephesians*; you will find such Riches of Christ, as are sufficient to stay the Soul, and feed the Understanding plentifully. Helps of Men are not unlawful, provided they be used lawfully; but it is never law-
ful,

ful, so far to rely and rest upon them, as to neglect God's Guidance, and his greater Authority over our Consciences.

THE Scriptures are the only Repository of infallible Religion.

LET us therefore, to conclude, every one of us be carefully exercis'd in the Business of reading, and meditating God's Word.

You will see the glad Tidings distinctly, and be able to give a Reason of the Hope, that is in you.

GOD withholds the Truth from no man, who seeks it seriously, and carefully. Let us also endeavour to be more and more built up in our

most holy Faith daily, let us understand throughly the Liberty, which we have in Christ Jesus, and press forward to a fulness of Stature in him.

By the Gifts of God's Spirit, which ordinarily come by means of the Scripture, a Christian enjoys a continual Light upon his Way. A kind of *Cloud by Day, and Pillar of Fire by Night*. He walks comfortably, and is thankful every Moment of his Life for the endless Mercies, which accompany it.

He walks solidly, and is dissolv'd finally in his appointed time, not with Uncertainty, but with Peace, and Satisfaction, and with an Assurance of being sav'd, even through him

him *who loved us, and gave himself*
in all Respects *for us, to wash us*
from our Sins in his own Blood, to
whom, with the Father, and the
Holy Ghost, three Persons, yet one
God, be render'd as is most due, all
Dominion, and Power, all Adora-
tion, Thanksgiving and Praise, hence-
forward and for ever.





ROM. iii. 24.

*Being justify'd freely by his Grace,
through the Redemption that is in
Christ Jesus.*

FREE Justification without any Measure of deserving on our Parts, or even our Endeavours, at any Time of Life, contributing thereto, is so beyond all human Expectation, that wise and learned Men are too too apt to disbelieve it; and the Generality of Mankind too ignorant to have Thought of it.

YET some there are who believe this Doctrine, and embrace it gladly,

ly, and are more and more establish'd in it daily.

THE same is Christ's true Church, or Collection of Men taken out of all Parties, who through Grace discern themselves to be entirely passive, and Receivers in this Matter ;

Being justify'd (as our Text affirms) **FREELY** *by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

I shall observe upon this Subject the following Points.

I st.

IT appears from Scripture, that Believers are justify'd **FREELY**, without any Deserving of their own, or even

even Endeavours contributing there-
to.

2dly, and lastly.

I shall endeavour to prove, that
in the Reason of the thing 'tis im-
possible for Man in a proper Sense
to contribute any part to his Salva-
tion; with some general Remarks
which may be of Use upon the Whole.

1st.

IT is the Doctrine of Scripture,
that Believers are all justify'd FREELY.

To be justify'd freely signifies
Man's being justify'd without any
sort of Price, Condition, or Qualifi-
cation, on his own part. Accepted
with God through Christ, without
any previous Righteousness of his
own.

THE

THE first Promise of Scripture respecting this Point is contain'd in that Passage, *It shall break thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel*; intimating, that of the Woman's Posterity shou'd arise a Person, who shou'd repair and restore the Fall of Mankind. No doubt *Adam* understood this to be a free Promise, otherwise it had carry'd in it no substantial Consolation. Of the same positive Import is the Promise made to *Abraham*, *In thy Seed shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed*; meaning by the Birth of Christ.

Now I wou'd ask, according to the first Sense of Words, are not these Promises free, and determinate, without any Qualifications call'd

call'd for on Man's part, no joint Condition is mention'd, nor yet to be understood, except what arises from our own uncommanded Fears?

NAY, *Abraham* himself the Father of Believers, was taken into the grand Promise, (for I am not speaking here of inferiour and worldly Promises, they indeed stand oftentimes on a different Foundation;) *Abraham*, I say, was taken into the grand Promise, before any Law or moral Commandment was prescrib'd, before he was circumcis'd, and a considerable time before the tryal of his Faith, in the Affair of sacrificing *Isaac*.

So when his Descendants came to possess the promis'd Land, being a Figure of the heavenly *Canaan*, to
be

be possess'd by Believers, it is particularly declar'd to them, that they shou'd not esteem themselves Inheritors through any Merits of their own; Quite otherwise.

Speak not in thy Heart for my Righteousness the Lord hath brought me in, but for the Wickedness of these Nations doth the Lord thy God drive them out, and that he may perform the Word, which the Lord sware unto thy Fathers.

AFTERWARDS when this chosen Nation fell into Misery, and into Captivity for a time, on Account of their Sins, it was not properly their Repentance, or any Measure of deserving on their Parts, which induc'd God to forgive their Sins, and bring
back

back their Captivity; Quite otherwise. God says, *I am He that blotteth out thy Transgressions, for my own Name's sake. It shall be wrought unto you, for my own sake, and for my own holy Name's sake, that my Name be not polluted among the Heathen.*

HERE was evidently a Carriage towards the Elect Family, proceeding of mere Favour, in Virtue of their Election, and in Virtue of God's Honour, and Glory.

IN the remarkable 16th Chapter of *Ezekiel*, Scripture says on this Subject, in Effect both to the Jew and to the Christian, *When thou wast in thy Blood, that is, in thy Original Uncleanneſs, and Condition of Sin, I ſaid unto thee, live. I ſware unto thee,*

thee, and enter'd into Covenant with thee; that is, I freely bound my self and enter'd into an Obligation of Honour, that I wou'd do thee Good, even an infinite Good.

PRESENTLY indeed follows Sanctification, which also is God's own Action; but observe, this Sanctification or Holiness in Nature was not found in any Measure before, so as to be an Inducement for rendring God favourable. THEN (says he) *wash'd I thee with Water, I cloath'd thee with broidred Work, with Gold, and Jewels, and thou becamest perfect through the Comeliness, which I put on thee.*

GOD'S Favour can surmount any Manner of Unworthiness, and can
cloath

cloath Nature afresh with fuch Ornaments, as Nature cou'd never purchase for its self, were it to give the World for them.

So the Prophet *Jeremiab*, *The Lord our Righteousness*. In these Words of *Jeremiab* the *Messiah* is evidently promis'd in the Character of Man's Righteousness, and Qualification for Heaven: that is, we are sav'd (if sufficiently humble to accept the benefit) by all the Purity, by all the Obedience, by all the Charity, by the infinite Morality of Christ's Life set to us, instead of our own.

THIS is an infallible, and everlasting Righteousness, such as will answer every Purpose, and every Occasion

caſion of Man, in regard of his Maker, and in regard of the great time of a future Eternity.

ACCORDING to that of *Daniel*, *Seventy Weeks are determin'd upon thy People, and upon the holy City, to finiſh the Transgreſſion, and to make an end of Sins, and to bring in everlaſting Righteouſneſs.* A Righteouſneſs very different from that of Man, and of a far happier kind, in which no time, nor the Scrutiny even of divine Judgment ſhall find a failure.

BEHOLD here a Cloathing for human Nature truly ſutable both to the Demand, and Worth of Heaven.

HITHERTO we have conſider'd the Promiſes relating to Chriſt, what

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he

he shou'd be, let us now pass on to what is declar'd of him in the New Testament. *God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself, therefore being justify'd by Faith, we have Peace with God thro' our Lord Jesus Christ*; for what the Law could not do through the Weakness of human Nature, *the bringing in of a better Hope did, Christ being the End of the Law for Righteousness to them that believe.* Not that Faith is a Virtue for which the Believer is justify'd, but it is the Instrument by which he receives, and apprehends his Justification. Rightly understood Faith imports exactly the same with our Text, that a Man is justify'd freely. A Person does not act good Works, and so obtain Heaven; but being justify'd freely thro' Christ,

Christ, he does good Works; only and entirely in Gratitude, otherwise he puts his Works in Christ's place.

MAN fell wholly by himself, he must rise as wholly by his Creator; who will not admit any boasting in the Creature: whereas did we contribute properly the least part to our Salvation, so far we shou'd have to boast. In brief, God will not give us Christ, unless we submit to take him freely. To give us deeper Sentiments of Humility, and Gratitude, and Thankfulness, and that the whole Glory, and not a part only, may center upon himself.

AGAIN, as Believers are all justify'd in Effect before themselves were born, in Virtue of what God

and Christ have transacted, so it is a point, not in themselves or in any Power of this World to cancel, forfeit, or make void.

THE purchase of Christ's Blood can be no uncertain purchase. There is no Sin possible, not only past Sins, but also no possible Sins to come, but for which God has already receiv'd the proper Satisfaction. I say not only past Sins, but a Believer's Sins to come are already done away, and his whole Salvation is a sure Matter, as being the legal Price, and just Effect of Christ's great Obedience.

AND otherwise our Salvation wou'd hang in continual Suspence, and Uncertainty; nay it wou'd be a Point impossible to be gain'd.

FOR

FOR the best Livers are never totally clear of Sin, nor will be clear of it, in the most guarded Remainder of Life, that may be propos'd. Therefore if Christ were only a Saviour for past Offences, our Condition wou'd still be wretched; we shou'd be ever in our Sins in some measure or other.

So with regard to Defects, our best Actions and best Endeavours for the future will still be imperfect, still defective. And perhaps the most virtuous Persons are more sensible of this Unhappiness, than Persons, who are less virtuous. So that on the whole if Christ be only a Saviour in part I shou'd be glad to know whence Men will produce the other part.

G 3

WHEREAS

FOR

WHEREAS the Righteousness of Christ's Life was compleat, and unexceptionable, and may be rely'd upon indeed. It was also given to them, and them only who have Discernment to see, that they have need of it.

AND this I humbly apprehend to be the true Notion of believing in Christ. No other believing comes up to the Purpose. Any other is disbelieving:

As I now proceed, 2dly and lastly, to make appear.

AMONGST all Mankind there are but two sorts of Religion, and but two ways they take to Heaven: The
first

first of these, which is most general, and may be call'd the Religion of the World, has Man's Morality, that is to say, his Temperance, his Devotions, his charitable Actions, for its Foundation, and Hope. Whereas, the Builders of *Babel* might as well hope to reach Heaven by the Tallness of a Tower, as Man by his Morality.

FOR do we consider what God is, and of what exquisite Worth the Kingdoms of infinite Happiness? God is pure beyond, and still beyond all we can imagine.

PERHAPS a rash Person wou'd think of standing in God's Judgment, as they who have least Merit, have frequently the least Modesty, but no one wou'd put himself upon this Tryal in his Wisdom.

POSSIBLY you will say here, Why? God can expect no more from us than for which we have Ability, and Power. True, but if through Corruption, and Defectiveness, (no way God's fault) we be subject to Condemnation, how will our Reason plead, if it be Reason, that he can dispense with his Attributes of Purity, and Holiness? Tho' he is mercifully dispos'd to the Creature, he must be just to himself. Could he dispense with the Defects of the Creature's Obedience, he might, by the same Argument, dispense with no Obedience at all. In this Case vain wou'd be the Deity, vain his Threats, even vain his Promises.

THE Law then is eternal, *just*, and *good*, and must needs be satisfy'd, either by us, or another in our stead. Righteousness must be had, of our own Growth, or by Derivation from Another. And who cou'd undertake this Work except the incarnate Jesus? who being God as well as Man contains in him a Merit every Way perfect, and suitable to our Necessity.

AND shall Man take Offence at the divine Bounty? Has he not rather Ground of more Thankfulness, and Praise? Such a Method of Salvation cou'd not have been form'd except in the Counsels of Heaven.

WHAT the Creature has to do, is to have Faith; that is, to open his
Hand

Hand and receive, and submit to glorify God in that Degree. Shou'd we not be surpris'd at a Beggar, who is starving in the Streets for Relief, yet will not open his Hand to accept a Benevolence? just so obstinate, and criminal, are all Persons who will not have Faith, and *will not come to Christ, that they might have Life!*

THE Door is open. Christ rejects no Man that comes to him. 'Tis true none do come in this right and full Apprehension, but the Elect, and those whom God has given to Christ. Yet who can say (howsoever unworthy at present, or blind for the past time) that he is not of that Number? We read of many unworthy Persons accepted daily in
the

the Gospel, whilst others, who still cleav'd to their own Righteousness, were shut out.

PERHAPS some will object, this were an easy way of going to Heaven, too easy to be true. So objected the Jews, whom many look upon to be, as it were, the only Unbelievers, *who going about to establish* (as St. Paul describes the general Case) *their own Righteousness, have not submitted themselves, and still do not submit themselves, to the Righteousness of God.*

NATURE is equally erroneous in all. Too many now expect to obtain Heaven by the Privileges of the Church to which they were born, and in which they have been educated,

cated, by Actions of Justice, and Charity, and especially by their receiving the holy Sacrament. Acts of Charity, and the holy Sacrament are very good things; but if they are put in the place of Christ, as too generally happens, such Protestants mistake their Foundation. They have not yet been Believers in Christ, whatsoever they may be.

THEY are beguil'd in their Notions; and have run into these Mistakes, in a great Measure, by neglecting to read the Bible. Too many take up their Religion on trust, and neglect God's greater, and superior Authority; whereas the People of *Berea* were wise and prudent, they search'd the Scriptures with their own Eyes, to be assur'd that the Teaching

Teaching of the Apostle were agreeable thereto. If Men neglect their Duty to God, which is the first, and take it for granted that what they hear comes from him, whether it does or not, it is to be fear'd, such will be ever learning, yet never come at the Truth.

IT is no other than an Artifice of Satan to make Men secure in what they call Religion, when oftentimes there is nothing in it. *What things* (says St. Paul) *were gain to me, those I counted Loss for Christ.* When a Man once enters into the Truth, and knows Christ, he finds every thing else, every other Scheme of Religion, to be Vanity and Delusion.

Whosoever believeth shall be sav'd;
have Faith in God. If ye find in
your

your selves at this time an Humility, and Thankfulness of Spirit, sufficient to close with this Truth which I have been asserting and describing, happy are ye, you will soon part with all to go further into it.

INDEED after a right Belief has once found its Way into the Soul, a Person finds himself dispos'd to all manner of Virtue and to all manner of Piety in Life, and Conversation. But it is upon a new foot from what he vainly labour'd in aforetime: by way of Gratitude, and by way of glorifying God, for the gift of Salvation, so freely bestow'd on us, and as it were without our Knowledge.

THE Love of Christ constrains to a Suitableness of Behaviour, as sweet Streams

Streams flow from a sweet Spring, or
as a Tree is known by its Fruit.

WHOEVER therefore is weary
with a Sense of Sin and Imperfection,
whosoever is exercis'd with Doubts
and Mistrust about Salvation, as hav-
ing never yet reach'd the Rock to
stand upon ; let him come to Christ,
in the Sense of a continual Justifyer,
without the least deserving on the
Believer's Part. And that he will
be a continual Justifyer, though a
Christian shou'd in any remaining
part of Life, fall into Sins, and Un-
worthinesses : Christ having at once
done every thing for him, that is to
be done.

I shall conclude with those re-
markable Words of the Prophet
Isaiab, in the 55th Chapter.

HO,

HO, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the Waters, and he that hath no Money, come ye, buy, and eat. Yea, come, buy Wine, and Milk without Money and without Price. Wherefore do ye spend Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which satisfieth not?

Your Thoughts are not my Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways, saith the Lord. For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts.

Instead of the Thorn shall come up the Fir-tree, and instead of the Briar shall come up the Myrtle-tree; and

a free Gift.

113

*it shall be to the Lord for a Name;
for an everlasting Sign that shall not
be cut off.*



H

JOHN



JOHN viii. 36.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

THE Jews understood our Saviour in this Passage, as speaking of civil Freedom; but he meant the Words, in that more important Sense of moral, and spiritual Freedom, which is the Deliverance of the Mind from Condemnation in God's sight.

As it is with the Jew, thus ignorant of his moral evil Condition, so naturally stands the Case of all Mankind. We are solicitous enough

Spiritual Freedom. 115

nough for the Liberty of our outward State, but are unhappily apt to overlook the Slavery of our inward State. Liberty there wou'd be valuable indeed.

FOR no person is free, in any good, and significant Sense of that Word, 'till a certain New-Birth, and an acting of the Spirit of God has wrought an Alteration in his inward Frame. He must see himself in a new Light; and have some Experience of the Riches of Christ, upon his Soul.

UPON this Occasion the Soul will perceive, and relish a Privilege, beyond every other in the World.

If the Son, that is, if Jesus Christ shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

I beg leave to consider upon this Subject the following Particulars.

1st.

By Birth, and Education, great is the bondage of every Person's Nature

2^{dly}.

SUCH who are rightly in Christ, are in a new State. They feel an Enlargement of Mind, and Spirit. Which establishes them in moral Liberty.

3^{dly}, and lastly.

I shall make some general Observations from the whole, for Application, and Improvement.

1st.

1st.

OF every Person's Nature, by Birth and worldly Custom, great is the bondage in various Respects.

WISE Persons even amongst the Heathens have perceiv'd, and lamented a Corruption in the Faculties of Man. They have discern'd, that 'tis easier to see, and know, what Virtue is, than to practise Virtue in an uniform, and unexceptionable Manner. They acknowledg'd therefore some defect in Nature, though they were ignorant of the Occasion, and Original of it.

Now by the Light of Scripture we understand, that this Depravity, and Weakness, of Nature to Good,
H 3 springs

118 *Spiritual Freedom.*

springs originally from the Fall of Men's first Parents in Paradise; the Sin of *Adam* was the Root of Bitterness to the World. But this is not all; we are sufficiently convicted of Imperfection, and do accordingly feel the terrour of future Judgment, every particular Man, from the Naughtiness of our own Hearts, and from our daily Transgressions. We need no causes of Condemnation, in the Eye of divine Judgment, farther than those, we confessedly bear within us, and are guilty of in our own Persons.

DEATH therefore upon these regards, *hath pass'd*, and Judgment hath pass'd, *upon all Men*; such only excepted, who through the Election of Grace, are ransom'd and deliver'd

deliver'd out of the Number. As Nature ordinarily lies, 'tis actually under Sentence; 'tis under a total Unacceptableness to the supreme Being.

MEN endeavour, indeed, to stifle the Apprehension of Futurity, and the Terrour of divine Judgment; but alas! there is a Witness constantly within the Breast of Nature, which will be heard sometimes, all the Arts and Divertisements of Life notwithstanding. Sin and Terrour sit uneasy upon the Spirit. These gloomy Tyrants hold Possession of the Spirit, till Christ comes, and *kills this armed Man, and delivers us out of the Hand of the Enemy.*

'TILL Christ comes to the Soul, by Revelation in some degree,

Rigour of the Law (and yet an unchangeable Law) stands drawn against us, like a destroying Sword, and there is no escaping. For *how shou'd Man be justify'd with God! or how shou'd he be clean, that is born of a Woman!* We cannot answer to God one Thought, or one Action of a thousand. 'Tis true, Nature will not see this its Condition thoroughly, though most certainly every Man's Condition, till it stands seriously before the Glass of God's Word.

IT requires to be awak'd, and to have an Insight given it, of its Misery, or it will not believe what *Nathan* said to *David*, *Thou art the Man*, for a long time. And yet who is there, that is not a Sinner, and perishable, and in need of all the

the Assistance which is in Christ, that can be communicated?

AGAIN. As Nature lies in Carelessness, and Stupidity, a long time, and in some Persons is never awak'd at all; so, another Branch of its Bondage consists, in its being under the Dominion of the Passions.

Now the Passions, or Desires, which lodge inwardly in our Nature, having taken a corrupt Turn, and having prevail'd against Reason, it is generally seen, that Men are much oftner Slaves of Passion, than Followers of Reason.

'Tis amongst the Signs of an unregenerate Person, that by these he is govern'd, in the Main of his Actions.

tions. 'Tis amongst the Signs of a regenerate Person, that such a one is not govern'd by the Passions; ordinarily, that is, and in the main.

'Tis true, the number of Men, who are influenc'd, and led daily, by these Springs, do fancy themselves to be in Liberty, and more in Liberty, than virtuous and strict Livers. But it is a great Mistake. Habitual Sinners are the greatest Slaves in the whole World.

THE Vices they follow can never, no never, be satisfy'd. They have not any Moderation, or bound, but long to 'em, except what happens from want of Power. The Follower of sensual Pleasure, the addicted to Pride, is a Slave to the Appetite

Appetite, and cannot in the Eye of Reason be esteem'd of otherwise. In this case, Men have let the Servants, that shou'd be, become their Masters. They are under more Influence, than they think of. Alas! these Lords in the Breast of Nature rule with a high Hand. Their *driving is like the driving of Jebu, the Son of Nimshi, for they drive furiously.*

Now not to be able to controul the Passions, must, if we view it carefully, be a great Reproach, and a Disgrace, upon human Nature, and is an evident token, that from the very Birth of it, all is not right within.

It appears by Experience, that in the Conduct, and Carriage of Nature,

Nature, there is something in it, the very contrary of moral Liberty. It by no means reaches to true Virtue, or right Reason, till a new Turn is given to it, and a new Power is added to it, by Grace and the Hand of God.

As I shall now, 2dly, endeavour to explain. Such Persons, who are rightly in Christ, have a new Power prevailing within them. Such enjoy moral Liberty.

1st. As to the State of the Conscience, with respect to God's Judgment.

WHEN a Person not only hears of Christ, and believes the History of him, but, which is a different thing,

thing, apprehends Christ, and believes him, to be a Righteousness, and a Strength, given to him, instead of his own; then the Sentiments of Terrour, and Guilt, and Weakness, leave a Man. Then he has peace with God. His Conscience takes a new Posture, being *sprinkled from the terrour of dead Works*, and of divine Judgment.

THE Law, indeed, first gave a Christian's Conscience a Sense of Sin; for we shou'd not know Sin, but by comparing our Life with the Commandment. This Sight, and Conviction, of Transgression, and Defectiveness, having a proper Effect, leads a Person immediately from *Moses* to Christ. He flies from the two Tables, perceiving his Impossibility of

of answering them, to the Mercy-Seat. This is the true Intent, and Office, of the Commandment. Such a one embraces Christ, in the Fullness of his Bounty to Souls *just ready to perish*, and in all the beauty of his cloathing, which is extended to the *miserable, and poor, and naked*, in their own Opinion. Here he rests, as upon a Rock, against all the Floods of Sin, and Judgment, and Difficulty, whatsoever.

By this mean Man is restor'd to Liberty. He begins to have Strength, and Comfort. He begins to live indeed. Probably he re-obtains that very Liberty, wherein *Adam* was first created. He has *pass'd from Death unto Life*. He ceases to have Confidence in the Flesh, or in his

OWN

own keeping the Commandment, for Salvation. He stands no longer upon his own Foundation. He perceives his Acceptance with God, to have been procur'd by Christ, once for all. And his Life is hid in Christ, as his Head, even to eternal Life.

ANOTHER Branch of moral Freedom is this, by the Work of the Spirit of Christ upon the Soul, the Powers of the Soul take a new turn towards Virtue, and Holiness.

THE Faculties of the Soul before Grace, are not worthy to be called Powers. They are Weaknesses, they are Impotencies, and do not attain to Virtue. Whereas, by the Addition, and Assistance of Grace, that part of us recovers the moral Strength, which

which probably was allotted to it at first, but had since been impair'd. It begins to act upon new Desires. Its Desire in general, and its Thirst in general, will be after Virtue, and Perfection.

THE Mind by corrupt Nature has Freedom, indeed, of Will, to such Actions, which it has any Notion of, or Desire after. Man has always a Will, that is free, but not a Will which is good, except through a Change, and Amendment, wrought in it by the Hand of God. The natural Man's Will is free, but not free enough. It does not reach, and extend so far, as to come within the Borders of Virtue. He resembles a Person in prison. A Prisoner is free in some sense, but his Freedom is bounded

bounded in a very narrow compass.

Now thro' Grace the Mind becomes enlarg'd from the Prison, from the dark and loathsome Dungeon, into which Sin, and Folly, had for a long time cast it. It comes forward into the Light; it walks freely through the wide and beautiful Field of Faith, Hope, Charity, Piety, Temperance, Fortitude, and every other Virtue, which can be suitable for a reasonable Nature to be exercised in.

I do not mean, that a regenerate Person lives, and sins not. So much Happiness does not seem attainable in the present Life. 'Tis a great, and happy Attainment, if Men can

I compass

compass to live rationally, and virtuously, in the main. It reflects also a manifest Honour upon Religion, that where it is, and Superstition and Hypocrisy have not taken its place, it has so good and valuable an Effect.

YET a Christian can never build so much upon virtuous Attainments, as to think of climbing up into Heaven by them. This wou'd be an Attempt, like building the Tower of *Babel*, with a View to reach Heaven, by the Tallness of that Structure. No. Human Righteousness comes infinitely short of such a Purpose. Christ's Righteousness, which was perfect in its kind, also from his being God, was alone equal to a purchase of so immense a value. And

for this Reason, that alone is trusted to, by an intelligent Liver.

THE Use, and Place of human Righteousness is, that it affords the Conscience a comfortable Proof, that such sort of Livers are certainly of the number of the Elect. It shews plainly, that such are of Christ's Flock, and are the true Church (or none are) that will be sav'd through Faith.

THE 2^d Use of Man's own Righteousness, is, that it tends greatly to God's Glory, and holds out in the World to others the Light of a good Example. And indeed who can be exercis'd in God's Glory, more than the Duty of Gratitude calls him, in Remembrance of his free Election through Grace? What Christian can

do too much for God, in a way of Zeal, or Charity, or Devotion, or any exemplary Office, who has, without the least Merit, nay when he was yet a Rebel, bestow'd on him so inestimable a Privilege? Christians properly such have been justify'd, and wrote down in an infallible manner for Happiness, before themselves had any Knowledge, or Existence.

STILL God exempts no Man from the Law of Morality, and Obedience, to the best of his power. Though a Christian made free by Christ, has a wonderful Liberty, both within, and without, so far as is not offensive, yet he has no Licence to sin. *Faith without Works is dead*, neither can it save a Man; that

that being the right Faith, and the undoubted Mark of Election, which worketh by Love.

I come now, 3dly and lastly, to draw some general Observations, for our Application and Improvement.

It appears to serious Observers, that the World in general lieth in Error, and Darknes, and few are they, to whom the Arm of the Lord is reveal'd.

FEW are they, who have either a distinct Knowledge of Christ, or who are properly under the Influence of his Spirit. Yet no Sinner, or Person under Error has Cause to despair. The Way of Knowledge is hedg'd up against no Man. And,

I 3 *Whosoever*

Whosoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast him out: Only let him come with Weeping, and with Supplication, and with a thorough Sense of the Value of Christ.

FOR it is the wretched, and miserable, the poor, and naked, and blind, in their own Opinion, that are capable of receiving him. He came not to call *the righteous*, such who in any Degree esteem themselves righteous, but Publicans, and Sinners, who esteem themselves with *St. Paul the chief of Sinners.*

TO these, who are self condemn'd, and cast absolutely on the free Mercy of God, Christ reveals himself in all the Seasonableness of his Power, and Acceptance, with the Fa
ther

ther. He is the Propitiator, and the Advocate, who is able to save to the uttermost; and who throws over the Soul of the Penitent a new Cloathing, a shining Robe, consisting of all the Virtue, and consisting of all the Worthiness, which compos'd his own Life. And, *Thanks be to God, doubtless, for this unspeakable Gift.*

How shou'd Man appear at the Bar of future Judgment, to stand the test of infinite Purity! How shall he stand as an Expecter of Heaven, unless a Garment be given him, instead of his filthy Rags!

AGAIN.

As Salvation is in Christ, so it is in Christ wholly. It is not partly

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by

by ourselves, and partly by him, making up our Defects, and supplying what we have Occasion of; as if the Gospel were a remedial Law, a Dispensation of Indulgence and Favour. No. It is a Revelation of the Messiah, whose Righteousness alone fulfilling the moral Law, answers every thing. For we ourselves cannot fulfill one single Virtue, in a perfect manner. In this Matter a mixt Way is no Way at all.

GOD must have all the Honour of our being sav'd, or none: It being as much an Error, for us to impute a part of that Work to ourselves, as to impute the whole of it.

IT is remarkable, the Notion of obtaining Heaven, partly by Christ, and

and partly by our own Prayers, and Devotions, with moral and charitable Acts (though these things must always be endeavour'd) discovers itself to be an Error in this, that a well-meaning Christian, who has no better Apprehension, always finds himself cast back, and back again to the beginning of his Work. He is perplex'd, sometimes despairs, and never has any reasonable Assurance of his Point, in such a Manner, as to love God, and proceed on his Way comfortably, and chearfully.

IN truth, it is the Suffering of Christ for our Sins, once for all, and the unexceptionable Obedience of his Life, imputed to us, which the right Faithful have Confidence in, both in Life, and at the hour of
Death,

Death, and at the Bar of future Judgment.

HENCE we come to love God aright, by perceiving the Riches of his Wisdom, and Compassion, towards us; who hath devis'd such a Method, that Heaven and Earth cou'd not have devis'd any Method of Salvation like it.

To conclude. Religion properly understood, gives every Christian a real Enlargement of Spirit, and a comfortable ground to go upon. A Christian proceeds chearfully, he passes from Grace to Grace, till by time and Experience, he has some Evidence of Christ to his Spirit, and Foundation of Hope, which nothing can ever remove.

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THIS is the Freedom of Christianity, so *worthy to be receiv'd of all Men with all Thankfulness.* A Freedom of more Importance to the Soul, and of more Value, than any bodily Freedom, or than all the Privileges of Life put together. Without it, Men are Slaves, and dead Men, in the midst of all their Power, and Glory. With it, a Bondsmen is free, a Servant may be more rich than his Master; the poor, and humble, and meek, become *more than Conquerors.*

THIS Effect, and Power, of the Spirit of Christ upon the Soul, is remarkably set forth in a Passage of the Prophet *Isaiah*, *I am sent* (says the Prophet in the Person and Character
of

of Christ) *to proclaim Liberty to the Captives, and the Opening of the Prison, to them that are bound. To give unto them Beauty for Ashes, the Oyl of Joy for Mourning, the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness.*

BEING then made free, according to this extensive Liberty of the Gospel of Christ, let us rejoice evermore in this free Grace. Let us also love God, with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength, glorifying him daily by our Life, and Actions.

HENCEFORTH, *whatsoever we do, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the Honour of God, and to the Advancement*

vancement of his Truth, and Glory,
amongst Men.

THEREFORE to God, only wise
and good, the only Potentate,
be render'd for these Mercys,
all Dominion, and Glory, all
Adoration, Thanksgiving and
Praise, henceforth and for Ever-
more.





MATT. xxii. 42.

What think ye of Christ?

HOW do most Persons certainly know but that their religious Opinion may have proceeded from Mistake? 'Tis always Odds against a Religion of Education.

A reasonable Being is oblig'd not to take this Point upon Trust, tho' he does worldly things, but to examine it seriously, and diligently.

RELIGION does not come to us from our Parents. It is none of the Gifts of Nature.

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WE have Cause therefore of Precaution, since our Soul's Interest depends hereon, to see that we have not embrac'd some Counterfeit instead of Truth, and Superstition (when by our selves least suspected) instead of Religion. They are so alike 'tis no easy Matter to distinguish. They are only to be distinguish'd by the Scriptures.

MORE especially, Matters of Belief shou'd not be taken upon Trust by any Means: Such Conduct cannot be answer'd either to God, or our own Reason. We must *prove all things, then hold fast, and try the Spirits whether they be of God.*

Now

Now the chief Question in Religion is this in our Text: *What think ye of Christ?*

UPON which great Subject I shall beg leave to observe the following Particulars.

1st.

WHAT too many think about Christ, in a false and scanty Way, and consequently they think what Christ is not.

2dly, I shall consider,

WHAT Christ really is; and of what infinite Value to the Soul of the true Believer.

1st.

I am to observe what too many think

think of Christ in a false and scanty way: Christ is nothing of which.

THERE are Persons who thought Christ an Impostor, and Deceiver; namely the chief Priests and Pharisees, who were pleas'd to say, *we remember that that Deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again.* So greatly do Men mistake, and even asperse the Truth, when Malice and Envy are the only Eyes they see with.

THEY judg'd as ill on another Occasion, when they imputed his Casting out Devils to a familiarity they suppos'd him to hold with *Beelzebub* the Prince of the Devils. We meet with the same malicious Thought when he cur'd the blind
K Man;

Man; *Give God the Praise* (say they hypocritically) *as for this Man, we know that he is a Sinner.*

NOW in this Degree of Infidelity and Blasphemy, perhaps few are found at this day who equal the Scribes and Pharisees. There are who equal, and who imitate them, in adhering ignorantly to their own Righteousness, for Salvation, and human Inventions in Religion, instead of submitting to receive the Righteousness of God through Faith, that is Christ's Righteousness, which the Gospel imputes, and sets to us, instead of our own.

THE Jews were Infidels against the Truth of his Person, Infidels now are against the Power of it.

OTHER

OTHERS thought Christ to be a great Prophet, a Teacher, and Example of Virtue; that he was *John* the Baptist risen again, or *Elias*, or one of the Prophets. And with this Opinion falls in the Opinion, and Acknowledgment of the present Age; as also, that he is a Saviour, and Redeemer in such a Sense, as to render God favourable, and merciful to Mankind, in respect to past Sins and Offences, provided they amend and improve their Lives for the Future. They are willing to hope, that the Sacrifice and Righteousness of Christ have inclin'd and determin'd God, to accept their Repentance and sincere Endeavours.

MEN believe that his Intercession, and Mediation above are powerful in

their behalf. Very powerful in regard of what he has done, and his continual Acceptance with the Father.

AND yet these Estimations of Christ are short, vastly short of his real Value. If Men find out no more, in the Gospel, and believe no more, they might as well have believ'd Nothing. To think in these Terms of Christ, without going further, is not to know him. It is not acknowledging the Truth. It is not Believing, but all this is Disbelieving.

THE Salvation of Man, still fallen and sinful Man, is a free Gift. It is held forth in Christ, in whom the true Believer trusts for Justification
from

from all those things, from which he cou'd not be justify'd by the Law, that is, by any moral Qualification in himself, yet he is assur'd of Salvation through Christ's Purchase, God having accepted it for that End.

THIS is God's Christ; as excelling in his pretiousness to the Soul the Christ unbelieving Men form in their scanty Imaginations, as God's Thoughts are higher than Man's Thoughts, or as the Heavens are higher than the Earth.

ALL Nature lies in Darknes as to this Point. Nature does not see the Gospel, as the Jews did not comprehend the Light of Christ, though in the midst of them, till God removes the film from its Eye. Mil-
K 3 lions

lions indeed think they see the Gospel, and think they profess it. Whilst 'tis only a Dream of Profession, and a Shadow of Faith, till the Key of *David* has given them an Entrance into it.

NATURE does not know the tenth of its Sinfulness, and Imperfection. It does not conceive the need it has of Christ. It owns him in part, but it deceives itself, not owning him in the whole. For the Creature shou'd consider, God is pure to an infinite Degree, nor can the Law make any Abatement; so that Man can never be justify'd without an exact and infinite Righteousness. Men are apt to flatter themselves, but in truth the Salvation of Nature as it now lies is an impossible thing.

Abso

Absolutely out of its Reach. Where shall we find an exact Righteousness, or an infinite? where? except in our Lord Jesus Christ: Whose human Nature had the divine Nature united with it. Who fulfill'd all Righteousness, not for himself, but for others, and was *the End of the Law for Righteousness to every One who believeth*; In a Way instead of Man's own, which cannot but be imperfect, and short of the Commandment, after our best Endeavours, and most repeated Labour to attain it.

WE cannot attain so high. We therefore fly from *Moses*, from every Expectation of Morality, and go out of our selves to lay hold on God's Bounty, who has transfer'd upon us

a great Mystery, the Merits of his own Son.

IN this new Cloathing a Christian stands comfortably; he stands infallibly. Without this Cloathing where can the best Liver stand, when infinite Purity is to judge? What single Virtue, what single Prayer, what Repentance, what highest Devotion even at the holy Table will he affirm he can trust to, siftable by this Judgment? God's Judgment cannot help being exact.

SURELY we have need of Christ though he be infinite. We needed such a Christ, else wherefore did his Divinity come down? or why for much Innocency die? If less could have suffic'd, Righteousness had certainly

tainly been acted by some other Method; but such was the Depth of Sin, and such the Height of free Mercy.

WE fell wholly by our selves, we rise as wholly by God; no other can be a right Sense of this matter. God will permit in the Believer no degree of boasting. He will not take at our Hands something of a Price for Christ of our own Works, or any Notion of Worthiness; such is his Glory he gives no Man Christ, unless he submits to take him freely.

THE least Tittle of Self-Sufficiency shuts a Person out from being a Believer, as much as if he had not believ'd at all.

I shall therefore now, 2dly, and lastly, endeavour to explain what Christ is, when thought of aright; of what immense Value to the Soul.

THE Effence of believing in this Name consists in believing in him for Justification, not in acknowledging him as a Teacher only, or Exemplar, or Intercessor and Saviour in part; but as an entire Righteousness given and transfer'd to us, instead of our own.

A great Mystery this, yet a certain Truth no way unsuitable, but suitable to God's Perfection, and Goodness. It introduces into Nature a marvellous Light, *the Light of this Day is sevenfold.*

BEFORE

BEFORE this Discovery every Man is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked, but the amazing Help of God's free Gift being reveal'd to a Soul, the Soul becomes spiritually rich, and secure, as to future Judgment, on a sudden. It possesses a spiritual Provision against that Day *pretious as Gold tried in the Fire.*

IT now stands before divine tremendous Judgment fully acquitted, having a *white Raiment* cast upon it, suitable to Heaven indeed, and which infinite Purity itself can find no Blemish, or Flaw in.

To a Believer *all things are become new.* He looks upon God with
Comfort,

Comfort, with Assurance, instead of Doubt and Terrour. Christ being supply'd as it were, to his Hands, bringing with him the Present of his Righteousness, and Sufficiency, has establish'd a Peace in his Soul, which no Cloud of spiritual Doubting, and not even Sin, can ever totally remove away. He feels a new *Peace of believing*, a *Joy* beyond Extent and beyond Utterance.

INSTEAD of Damnation, such a one sees infallible Justification; a reconciled God, a God who has accepted a full Price for him, even for his Sins past, present, and to come; which Price he will never exact twice, so as to have it of his Redeemer, and him too: He stands in a Righteousness, not like the Righteousness of Men,

but

but such as merits Heaven truly: The whole (for such is the Effectualness of Christ's Work) so assur'd to him, that his own Offences and Infirmitys cannot destroy it, or make it void.

SUCH is the Christ whom God gives. Nothing in Word or Thought can fully estimate his Value. He is the greatest Mercy God could give, and every other Mercy comes by him.

AND this is the Believer's Way of thinking of Christ, whilst others think of him in a most unhappy Way of Defectiveness. Such Men have hitherto, notwithstanding their professing his Gospel, and notwithstanding their being rank'd amongst Christians, known nothing of him. They have been beguil'd of him.
Possibly

Possibly God may render to them in time this glorious Revelation.

THE Believer knows that Christ's Righteousness made ours by Imputation is the great Mystery of the Gospel ; the Pearl of great Price happily found ; the Field, which he has gladly parted withal, and especially the Rags of his own Righteousness, to purchase. Every thing else is Loss and as Dung, lost Labour in Man, and a Labour even offensive to Heaven.

HERE is a Heighth and a Depth which fills the Believer's Spirit with Joy and Wonder all manner of ways, when he thinks actively and well upon it. A Depth of Unworthiness on his own side, in God's free and boundless

boundless Gift, an Heighth of Love,
possible only to divine Perfection.

INDEED Persons of the World,
who know not God in the Face of
Jesus Christ, seem to themselves to
have their valuable Possessions also.
One rests himself upon his moral
Virtues, his Repentance, his Prayers,
his Charity. Another is well enough
pleas'd if he has the Goods and Pro-
sperity of this Life; Another thirsts
after sensual Satisfactions, and is
swallow'd up in gratifying the Ap-
petites.

THIS Man covets Gold, and *says*
to the fine Gold, Thou art my God;
his Aims are fir'd by Ambition, he
seeks Greatness, and perhaps obtains
it, he grasps a Sceptre, and com-
mands Millions.

YET

YET what is this Prosperity, this Throne, if Christ be wanting? What this fine Gold, this Affluence, or pleasing of the Appetite? To what amounts our human Virtue, our boasted Pretences to Reason, our moral Excellence? They are altogether light, and deceitful. Standing on our best foot, we can never answer God *one of a thousand*.

SUCH like Considerations, if we know no better, are miserable Comforters to the Soul, that wants a perfect Righteousness, and must needs be immortal; that must needs be miserable or happy without End. Do any of these Goods *extend* to God? Nothing but Christ extends to God, and establishes a sure Prospect of Eternity.

A Christian who is sensible of the Riches of Christ subsists daily, and lives daily, upon the Matter thereof. He feels it *a Feast of fat things*. He wants nothing else, not Meat, Drink, nor Cloathing, having Christ he possesses all things, because the Apostle says, *God has with him freely given the Believer all things*, that is, all things which he can have Occasion or Necessity of in Life, are bound up in the Covenant in as safe a manner (oh that we did not want Faith!) as if they were already in our Hands. A valuable Redeemer this, not in the Reach of Words to describe, or the Power of Thought to comprehend fully.

Lo, *This is my beloved, and this is my Friend O Daughters of Jerusalem.*

lem. The Daughters of *Jerusalem* or Generality of Persons possibly wonder at this Rout made about Christ; They have no Notion of him in this kind. But a Believer knows it, he affirms it, and a thousand times more, were it possible.

THE World objects *what is thy beloved thy Hope of Salvation more than another's?* The Church too sensible of her Happiness to be shaken from it, says moreover, *He is altogether lovely, the chiefest amongst ten thousand. He is fairer than the Children of Men, because God hath anointed him with the Oyl of Gladness above his fellows.* Therefore every Soul which is rightly affected loves him truly. *What have we in Heaven but him?* much less is there any thing upon Earth to attract us equally.

Look we amongst the Angels, the Beings of most excellent Glory above, Christ exceeds them all, the Angels are directed *to worship this first begotten, when he cometh into the World.* In Heaven and in Earth he hath *the preeminence*, and certainly merits with us, who have tasted his Riches, the Preeminence in all things.

HE is the great ordain'd way to eternal Happiness, our future Sight and Enjoyment of him will be that Happiness itself.

SEEING these things are so, what abundant Cause have we, my Brethren, to rejoice in the Strength of this Salvation, and to acknowledge it.

It becometh well the just, and who are these but the justify'd to be thankful.

ful. We owe so much to Christ, and the Gospel.

LET those who are not so conversant, and understanding in the Gospel, as they ought to be, be made sensible, that in Case they do not acknowledge Christ fully, they are short of the truth, and Men who are short of the truth cannot be sav'd by that truth.

Search the Scriptures. They are the best Witness of Christ not the Words of any Man. Meditate the Words of our Text what think ye of Christ, what Light and Stability has he brought to your Souls, with seriousness; that no Artifice of Satan may keep you from the whole Truth. Too many, as the World is now manag'd, are beguil'd of Christ. They stop inconsiderately in the mid Way

PERSONS

PERSONS shou'd read the Scriptures with their own Eyes. Especially the Writings of the Apostle *Paul*; which are given by Providence not for Ministers only (for why so? or where is it once so said?) and these oftentimes no other than Ministers of Man's Presumption, but for all sorts of Men *to profit withall*.

Now the Scripture is plain in every Point necessary to Salvation, to the lowest Capacity, but that the World wants Faith to think so; in unnecessary Points it is not plain even to the learned.

IT appears one of the most needed things in these times, that Christians shou'd look into their Bibles.

THIS

THIS Exercise wou'd cast a proper Light upon their Belief. They wou'd not walk darkly and uncertainly, as do too many, but they wou'd be able every one *to give a Reason of the Hope that is in them.*

A Believer is always capable of giving such a Reason, or Argument, of his hope, which neither the Justice of the most High, nor the piercing malice of his Adversary, nor even his own terrible Sins can once shake, or make void. Such is God's Christ, and his free Gift; such, I say, is God's Christ so glorious, so extensive, so once and for ever effectual in what he has done!

INDEED a Believer does good Works, and no Privilege excuses him
from

from it, upon a foot of Gratitude, upon a foot of Thankfulness; still he adds not the least Grain to Christ's Work of Redemption. This always remains, and is the Rock he stands upon. And finally, every Believer is persuaded with the Apostle that *neither Life, nor Death, nor Angels nor Principalities nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor Height, nor Depth, nor any other Creature shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, this free, infallible, endless Love, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

To God therefore whose Wisdom is only infinite, and Goodness infinite, be render'd as is most due, all Dominion, and Glory, and Thanksgiving, for ever and ever, *Amen.*

F I N I S.

By the same AUTHOR.

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